

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The foregoing amendments and these remarks are responsive to the Office Action dated April 9, 2004. The Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that Claims 5, 6 and 12-20 would be allowed if rewritten in independent form including all of the recitations of the base claim and any intervening claims; and, as discussed in greater detail below, the Applicants have rewritten claims in independent form including all of the recitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and these remarks is respectfully requested.

The Office Action objects to Claim 1 on the grounds that it includes some awkward language. The Applicants respectfully disagree. Nonetheless, and in an effort to expedite prosecution, Claims 1 and 12 have been amended in this regard for purposes of clarification, rather than for the purpose of narrowing the scope of the claims. Likewise, Claim 18 has been amended for purposes of clarification, rather than for the purpose of narrowing the scope of the claims.

As mentioned above, the Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's indication that Claims 5, 6 and 12-20 would be allowed if rewritten in independent form including all of the recitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. In an effort to expedite prosecution, Claims 1 and 12 are the only pending independent claims, Claim 1 represents Claim 6 rewritten in independent form including all of the recitations of the base claim and any intervening claims, and Claim 12 has been rewritten in independent form including all of the recitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. In addition, Claim 12 has been further amended to indicate that each of the safety elements is mounted for pivoting relative to the pawl, which is supported, for example, in the application at page 3, lines 17-29, although the Applicant does not intend for the claims to be limited to the disclosed embodiments. Claim 12 has also been amended to adopt novelty from Claim 4.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that each of the independent Claims 1 and 12 are in condition for allowance. It is further respectfully submitted that the dependent

claims are in condition for allowance because of their respective dependence from an allowable independent claim and because the dependent claims further patentably distinguish the present invention. For example, the Examiner's attention is specifically directed to new dependent Claims 21-27, which are respectively supported in the specification at, for example, page 4, line 14; page 3, lines 19-20; and page 3, lines 21-22, although the Applicant does not intend for the claims to be limited to the disclosed embodiments.

It is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for immediate allowance, and such action is solicited. If for some reason the Examiner deems that the present application is not in condition for immediate allowance, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner telephone the undersigned at 704-444-1184, in an effort to expedite prosecution.

Consideration Of Previously Submitted Information Disclosure Statement

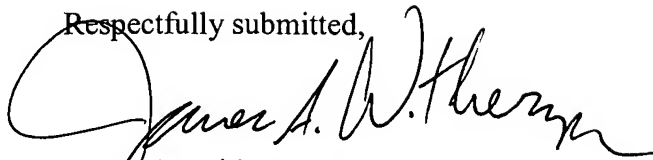
It is noted that a partially initialed copy of the PTO Form 1449 that was submitted with Applicants' Information Disclosure Statement ("IDS") filed November 24, 2003 was returned to Applicants' representative with the Office Action. That is, all of the citations were initialed by the Examiner, except that Cite No. 19 (i.e., U.S. Pat. App. No. 10/646,567) was not initialed. Accordingly, U.S. Pat. App. No. 10/646,567 is cited again in the IDS filed herewith, and it is requested that a fully initialed copy of the Form 1449 be forwarded to the undersigned with the next communication from the PTO.

Confirmation of Receipt of Foreign Priority Document

It is noted that the Examiner has not acknowledged receipt of the foreign priority document that was filed August 22, 2003 for the present application. Accordingly, it is requested that the Examiner acknowledge receipt of the foreign priority document in the next communication from the PTO. Applicant will be pleased to provide proof of filing the foreign priority document upon the Examiner's request.

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Respectfully submitted,



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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on June 22, 2004



Grace R. Rippey